

In the Claims:

1. (Original) A nucleic acid encoding the α -chain of hepatocyte growth factor or an N-terminal fragment thereof, ~~characterized in that in said nucleic acid~~ wherein least one of the codons of amino acids selected from the group consisting of codons at positions 33, 35 and 36 is CGT.

2. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~The nucleic acid ~~according to~~ of claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the codons of amino acids at positions 33, 35 and 36 are CGT.

3. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of α -chain of hepatocyte growth factor or an N-terminal fragment thereof (NK polypeptide) ~~by comprising the steps of a)~~ expression of a nucleic acid encoding said NK polypeptide in a microbial host cell; b) isolating of inclusion bodies containing said NK polypeptide in denatured form; c) ~~solubilization of~~ solubilizing the inclusion bodies; and d) renaturing (naturation) of the denatured NK polypeptide, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein in said nucleic acid at least one of the condos of amino acids selected from the group consisting of codons at positions 33, 35 and 36 is CGT.

4. (Currently Amended) The method ~~according to~~ of claim 3, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the codons of amino acids at positions 33, 35 and 36 are CGT.